You Do Not Deserve to be Buried Next to Him
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You Do Not Deserve to be Buried Next to Him

by tnystrk3000

Summary

As Todd got closer to Neil's grave, he noticed another headstone next to his, which he thought was odd. There'd never been one on the right side of Neil's before. He'd always assumed Neil was at the end of the row because there were already rows behind Neil's. Why had they decided to bury someone next to Neil now, eight years later?

Todd approached the grave and blanched when he read the inscription on it.

-or-

Todd visits Neil's grave eight years after his death and is surprised to see who is newly buried next to Neil.

Notes

TW: canon character death, minor character death, mentions of manipulative/abusive fathers.

See the end of the work for more notes

It had been eight years since the tragic end of Neil Perry's life.

Eight years since Todd Anderson had seen Neil, heard his voice, felt his touch. Not a day went by over the last eight years that Todd didn't miss Neil.

Some days were better than others, of course. Some days, Todd wouldn't feel sad. He would see a flyer for a play or hear Neil's favorite song as he walked down the street, and he would smile at the memories of Neil. In those moments, Todd could almost feel the ghost of Neil next to him, wrapping him in a hug to let him know that he was still there. These were the days he could happily talk to his colleagues and friends about Neil.

But other days, Todd would be weighed down by his grief. He would go about his day on the verge of tears, desperately wishing he could go back and save Neil. On these days, even the smallest things would remind him of Neil, and it would be enough to send his mind spiraling. On his worst days, Todd could barely get himself out of bed; the guilt from not doing more to save Neil sitting heavily on his chest, pinning him down.

Every year on his birthday, Todd went back home to Vermont to visit Neil's grave. Todd had always hated his birthday growing up. His parents would leave him a flimsy card and ignore him for the entire day. On the rare occasion that they bought him a gift, it was typically something he'd already owned, like a desk set.

Todd only got to spend one birthday with Neil, but it was the best birthday he'd ever had. After he'd received a duplicate desk set from his parents, Neil had found him sitting outside alone and had done everything he could just to make him laugh. That was the first time Todd had ever smiled on his birthday.

On his first birthday since Neil's death, Todd decided that Neil was the only person he wanted to spend his birthday with, so he got on a train and headed up to Vermont. It became a tradition for him; every year, he would take a trip to Vermont to spend his birthday with Neil.

Now, on the eighth birthday since Neil's passing, Todd stood in his quaint hotel room, digging through his small suitcase to find his journal. Even after his death, Neil remained Todd's muse. The majority of Todd's poems were about him or were written with him in mind. Since Neil never got to see Todd read his poems during Dead Poets Society meetings, Todd always made sure to bring his latest

poetry with him to read to Neil.

He wasn't really sure if he believed in heaven or the afterlife, but Todd hoped that if Neil was somewhere, he could hear his poems.

When he finally found his journal, he tucked it safely in the pocket inside his coat, right against his chest. He buttoned his jacket and wrapped an old scarf around his neck before sliding his shoes on. Todd took a deep breath, collecting himself before he opened the door and left his hotel room.

The cemetery Neil was in was only a 10-minute walk from the hotel, which was why Todd always stayed there when he was in town. It was a cold November morning in Vermont, the wind biting Todd's exposed face as he walked, but he didn't mind. He enjoyed the short walk; it gave him time to gather his thoughts before seeing Neil.

Todd reached the old, rusted gates of the cemetery and headed up the icy walking path. It had snowed a week before his visit, so the cemetery was still dusted in white. Todd thought it almost felt angelic —he'd have to write about it later.

Despite only coming annually, Todd knew the cemetery like the back of his hand. Neil's final resting place was in the back half of the cemetery, five rows back from the road that separated the older plots and the newer plots, and it was the last spot in the row. Todd stuck to the path, letting his feet carry him through the first half of the cemetery. He looked around as he walked, not seeing many other people around.

Todd always liked to guess why the other people were in the cemetery. Sometimes, he wrote poems about the people he saw.

He passed an older woman holding a cane in one hand and a bouquet of roses in the other. A younger woman was by her side, helping her lay the flowers in front of the headstone. Todd guessed that the woman was visiting her late husband on their anniversary, hence the roses, and the younger woman was her daughter.

He passed a tired-looking man and two small children, all of them crying as they sat in front of a headstone with a small flag planted in the ground next to it. A man mourning his wife, who died in the military, the flag was a giveaway. The two kids must have been their children. Todd couldn't imagine how the father could keep raising their kids without his wife by his side.

The last person he passed was someone who looked young, maybe around his own age or slightly younger, if Todd had to guess. The grave the young man was in front of was closer to the path, and Todd could hear him telling the deceased person some updates on his life. It reminded Todd of him and Neil. Perhaps the young gentleman had also lost a friend.

When Todd finally reached row five of the back half of the cemetery, he walked straight to the end of the row to where a large tree just outside of the gates was planted. The tree's branches stretched over the cemetery, providing Neil's grave with the perfect amount of shade in the summer when the branches were still covered in leaves. But since it was nearing winter, all of the leaves had already been shed.

As Todd got closer to Neil, he noticed another headstone next to his, which he thought was odd. There'd never been one on the right side of Neil's before. He'd always assumed Neil was at the end of the row because there were already rows behind Neil's. Why had they decided to bury someone next to Neil now, eight years later?

Todd approached the grave and blanched when he read the inscription on it:

Thomas Arthur Perry
February 3, 1913 - September 28, 1967
Loving Husband and Father

Neil's father was dead. Neil's father had died recently, too—only two months ago. That's why no one was ever buried next to Neil, Todd realized. It was because the Perrys had bought the plots next to him so they could all be buried together when they'd eventually died.

Todd stared at Thomas Perry's grave in disbelief. He couldn't believe that Mr. Perry was dead. But as his gaze moved to Neil's grave, he was filled with rage. How dare he die less than 10 years after Neil? If Neil were still alive, he would have been 24 years old, likely halfway through medical school, if Mr. Perry had his way. Mr. Perry wouldn't have even lived to see Neil become a doctor.

Neil, age 24, would have been free from his father's iron grip and would have gotten to live the rest of his life the way he wanted to. He could have been an actor. But instead, he was forever a 16-year-old boy who never got to achieve his dreams.

Todd stood in front of Mr. Perry's headstone with a scowl on his face.

“How dare you?” He spat at the headstone. He didn’t speak for a few moments after that. He’d figured it was enough. He’d summed up everything he’d wanted to say in just three words. But when he looked back at Neil’s grave, he knew he had to say more. He had to stand up for Neil in a way he couldn’t eight years ago.

“It’s your fault Neil’s gone,” He said, venom in his voice. “Neil killed himself because you couldn’t accept the fact that he didn’t want to be a doctor. You had his whole life mapped out for him the minute he was born, and he hated you for it. You wanted Neil to have the life and career you never got to have. You wanted Neil to be a doctor because you couldn’t become one yourself. You never bothered to ask Neil what he wanted, even once. And it was *his* life.”

Todd paused, taking a minute to sort through his thoughts. The longer he stared at Thomas Perry’s grave, the angrier he got at the inscription.

“‘Loving father, ’” He read aloud before laughing bitterly. “What a fucking joke. You weren’t a loving father. You didn’t love Neil, and based on the things he used to tell me, I don’t even think you *liked* him. You didn’t care about him at all. If you really loved Neil, you would have seen how happy he was performing that night. You would’ve changed your mind and let Neil create his own life instead of trying to force him into the one you wanted for him, the one you knew he hated. You were *not* a loving father. I’m disgusted that you even think you earned that title.”

Todd reached down and grabbed a handful of snow, packing it tightly into a ball and throwing it at Mr. Perry’s grave.

“Fuck you!” He shouted, tears pricking his eyes. “Fuck you! You’re the reason Neil is gone. You may not have pulled the trigger, but mark my words, Thomas Perry: You killed Neil. I lost my best friend because of you. Your own wife lost her son because of you. Neil died because of you. You killed your own child. You do not deserve to be buried next to him, you fucking asshole. Neil is nothing but a decaying corpse underneath the snow and dirt instead of happily living his life as an actor, and it’s all your fault. How dare you lie next to him with the words ‘loving father’ on your headstone!”

Todd, furious beyond belief, let out a scream from deep within. It clawed its way out of his throat, taking all of the anger for Mr. Perry and grief for Neil with it. Todd screamed and cursed at Mr. Perry’s headstone until his throat felt raw and his vocal chords felt shredded.

Eventually, his screaming died out, and he was left a sobbing mess.

He stumbled over his feet, allowing his body to fall into the snow as he pulled himself away from Mr. Perry's grave. He crawled over to Neil's headstone, curling up against it with his back toward Mr. Perry's, as his body lurched from the force of his sobs.

"I'm so sorry, Neil," Todd choked out between his cries, resting his head against the cold stone. "I'm so sorry I didn't save you."

As Todd's broken wails filled the air, a woman stood off to the side a few yards away, with tears streaming down her tired face.

The recently widowed Mrs. Perry had been on her way to visit her husband and son, but stopped approaching their graves when she saw that someone was already there. She'd turned to leave, but as she started to go, the young man started yelling. She listened to his words in shock, almost going over to him to send him away from her family. But she soon found herself crying along with him as he began to weep.

Once he settled against her son's headstone, she could finally see his face and recognized him instantly. He was one of the boys who'd carried Neil's coffin into the cemetery; he was Neil's roommate at Welton.

Deciding it would be best to see her husband and son another day, Mrs. Perry turned and started down the winding path, leaving the young man to grieve.

Todd, so overcome by his emotions, never saw her there. He lived the rest of his life never knowing that Mrs. Perry had heard the words he so viciously screamed at her husband or the uncontrollable sobs he'd let out for her son.

End Notes

Dropping this like a bomb and running for cover...

If you're here from Twitter: hiiiii, I told you I'd write it. I feel very evil about it. I hope this is even better than my original tweet! (And I hope you stick around to read my other sad Todd fics).

If you're here because you've subscribed to me: heyyyy!!!! Bet you weren't expecting another notification from me today, since I've already uploaded the chapter of Poets (But Dead). I hope you all enjoy this little surprise fic!

If you're here because you've stumbled across this randomly: welcome to my ao3, I write nothing but ANGST! Stick around, there's more where this came from!

If you liked this, feel free to leave a comment and let me know! I read them all and reply to as many as I can as a way to show my gratitude for you taking the time to comment!

Kudos and Comments are much appreciated!

xoxo M. <3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!